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ABSTRACT

This bulletin highlights the efforts of the St. Louis Community College District to revitalize the liberal arts on its campuses. First, the structures and activities that were used to develop a liberal arts curriculum are described, including: (1) the formation of districtwide and campus Liberal Arts Committees; (2) the development of project objectives (i.e., to promote student understanding of the relevance of the liberal arts and the connections among disciplines; to establish a sense of identity for liberal arts transfer students; and to help faculty from different campuses share experiences, expertise, and views); (3) the identification by faculty of the skills and abilities to be emphasized in liberal arts education; and (4) the publication of a districtwide "Liberal Arts Calendar" of events. After stating the goals of the proposed liberal arts curriculum in terms of desired student abilities and skills, the bulletin identifies the components of the curriculum, which include courses in American history, political science, communications, computer literacy, a foreign language, mathematics, science, and physical education; a liberal arts seminar; and area and general electives. Finally, project efforts in the areas of interdisciplinary studies are examined and other district Liberal Arts Committee activities are described, including a liberal arts workshop, fantasy festival, computer workshop, and a performance piece. (HB)

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REVITALIZING THE LIBERAL ARTS IN ST. LOUIS

CSCC Bulletin
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Prepared by Stephen M. Curtis, Dean of Humanities,
St. Louis Community College at Forest Park

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BULLETIN

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Revitalizing the Liberal Arts in St. Louis

This issue of the **Bulletin** *was prepared by Stephen M. Curtis, Dean of Humanities, St. Louis Community College at Forest Park.*

The liberal arts are moving ahead in St. Louis. Since 1981, in conjunction with campuses in the Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Maricopa, and Miami-Dade community college districts, St. Louis has participated in a project to strengthen the liberal arts. This project is coordinated by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges(CSCC) under a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The CSCC undertaking presented St. Louis Community College with an opportunity to crystallize and develop its goal of revitalizing the liberal arts, as emphasized by Chancellor Richard K. Greenfield. Two curriculum-oriented efforts that had begun earlier have flourished. These and other efforts will be described in this issue of the **CSCC Bulletin**.

Liberal Arts Curriculum

In light of this charge to revitalize the liberal arts, St. Louis Community College established a structure specifically to enhance its academic curriculum. A district-wide faculty committee, entitled the Liberal Arts Committee, was organized to coordinate activities that cut across campus lines; individual campus committees were also formed. The chair of the district committee was a St. Louis faculty member, now Dean of Humanities, Stephen M. Curtis. The committee was given a separate budget with which to organize appropriate workshops, sponsor guest speakers, etc.

St. Louis Community College faculty members were asked to examine the role of the liberal arts in their college and to recommend ways to strengthen that role. The first task was to translate those charges into specific and relevant objectives. In discussions to determine those objectives, it was deemed important that 1) students understand the relevance of the liberal arts to their present and future lives; 2) both students and faculty see the connections among disciplines, rather than view an individual discipline in isolation; 3) a sense of identity be established for students in liberal arts transfer programs; 4) faculty in a multi-campus district share experiences, expertise, and views in order to further common goals.

Many of the activities conducted under the umbrella of the project derived directly from these considerations. As one example, a monthly *Liberal Arts Calendar* was established in response to the need for faculty to share inter-campus boundaries. This calendar, now in its second year of publication, is district wide in scope and lists all liberal arts activities occurring each month on the individual campuses. Distributed to all full and part-time faculty, it has resulted in a greater exchange and awareness among faculty on the three campuses.

An institutional goal identified by the Liberal Arts Committee was the creation of a Liberal Arts Curriculum. With the approval of the district's curriculum committee and the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Gwendolyn W. Stephenson, to whom the Liberal Arts Committee reported, a specific objective to emanate from the CSCC project was the formation of such a curriculum. The traditional liberal arts program educates students to be well-rounded, literate, skilled in communication, and capable of appreciating the finer parts of culture.

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Further, liberal arts courses challenge students to think critically, and to develop a sense of time and space and of one's place in each. Today's student, however, must also be able to deal with the vast information explosion, respond to new technologies, anticipate, and respond to change.

The St. Louis faculty sought to develop a transfer curriculum based upon a specific set of goals and objectives—experiences that the academic environment should provide for the student. Since many of these goals could not be isolated in a single course, they were to become an integral part of courses across the curriculum. The goals established by the faculty committee for a Liberal Arts Curriculum are intended to develop in the student a number of definable abilities or skills that may be required in problem-solving and task-oriented situations.

Goals

The student should develop:

1. an ability to think clearly, critically and creatively.
2. an ability to write clear and effective prose.
3. an ability to communicate orally in a clear and effective manner.
4. a knowledge of the arts and humanities.
5. an awareness of the human condition, with its problems, differences and responsibilities.
6. a knowledge of the environment, its limitations, and the relationships of living and non-living systems.
7. an ability to anticipate and respond to change.
8. an understanding of values and ethics.
9. an awareness that all knowledge is interrelated.
10. a knowledge of the scientific process.

Skills

The student should be able to:

1. locate, organize and analyze information.
2. make generalizations and recommendations.
3. appreciate the cultural, social, political and economic contributions of the past and present.
4. anticipate future problems or opportunities, and define and evaluate alternatives.
5. assess the impact of science and technology in relation to the physical and social environment.
6. understand and be sensitive to the differences among people, cultures and ethnicities.

Recognizing the need for a balanced curriculum in terms of both required and elective courses as well as the distribution of courses, the Liberal Arts Committee's recommendations evolved from the goals cited. The committee proposed requirements in the following areas.

AMERICAN HISTORY/POLITICAL SCIENCE: One course in each of these areas meets the Missouri state requirement for competency in the United States and Missouri constitutions (satisfies Goals 5, 8 and Skills 3, 4 above).

COMMUNICATIONS: The ability to communicate with one another in writing and in person is basic to human understanding. Equally important is the ability to think in a clear and critical manner. Two courses in composition and one in speech are designed

to develop these skills (Goals 1, 2, 3).

COMPUTER LITERACY: Recognizing that we live in a computer age, this requirement enables a student to acquire a working knowledge of the capability of the computer and some skill in the management of information (Skill 1).

FOREIGN LANGUAGE: The study of a foreign language develops an awareness of language as a communication tool and promotes an awareness of cultural diversity. The curriculum requires a two-semester sequence (Goals 5, 8; Skills 3, 6).

LIBERAL ARTS SEMINAR: The seminar is intended to draw together the main themes of the liberal arts education. It should be taken by the student after the completion of a minimum of 32 (of 64) credit hours (Goals 6, 10; Skills 1, 5).

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE: Many of the achievements of Western civilization rest on science and technology, whose methods require experimentation and abstract reasoning. The curriculum prescribes mathematics at the level of college algebra or above, and two laboratory sciences, one each in life science and physical science (Goals 6, 10; Skills 1, 5.)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION: This requirement recognizes the need to develop the body as well as the mind. Two activity courses are required (Goal 9).

AREA ELECTIVES: Two courses of the student's choice are to be taken in humanities, and two in social science. In each instance the two courses must be chosen from two different areas (i.e., in humanities, from art, film, humanities, literature, music, philosophy or theatre). This is to ensure a reasonable sampling of disciplines (Goals 4, 5; Skill 3).

GENERAL ELECTIVES: One course in interdisciplinary studies, one in Western culture, and one in non-Western or minority culture must be selected within the Area Electives and General Electives that a student chooses. Two courses are designed to provide the student with an understanding of the breadth of world cultures (Goal 5; Skill 6). The interdisciplinary concern is to demonstrate that all knowledge is interrelated (Goal 9). The student may choose any course designated as interdisciplinary.

This proposed curriculum, which was developed over a one-and-one-half year period, is expected to be in effect by the Fall, 1984 term.

the Meramac campus has maintained an active interdisciplinary program.

Interdisciplinary Studies

Considerable interest has been manifested in interdisciplinary studies in the past decade. (Issue #2 of the CSCC *Bulletin, What Are Interdisciplinary Studies?* focuses on this concern.) In St. Louis, the Florissant Valley campus was awarded a Consultancy Grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities to examine ways of integrating its western civilization program with a course in humanities, and, hopefully, to strengthen the vitality of each. Arthur J. Slavin of the University of Louisville made a series of on-site visits during which he led workshops on such topics as curriculum reform, alternatives to western civilization, and the place of humanities in the curriculum. As the consultancy progressed, goals were clarified and specific course reform proposals were examined. With the conclusion of the consultancy, a core committee of faculty developed a proposal for an interdisciplinary course that affords dual enrollment in western civilization and humanities, and satisfies curriculum requirements in both areas. The 6-hour course, which has been partially funded for 1983-84 through a subsequent NEH Pilot Grant, has as its focus the cultural, intellectual, and historical heritage of western man. It is led by a team of four instructors from art, history, literature, and philosophy utilizing a 'team' approach wherein all four are present at each meeting, whether the class meets as a whole or breaks into individual discussion groups.

Another innovative program was developed at the Meramec campus, which received an NEH Pilot Grant in 1979 to institute an Interdisciplinary Studies Program. The program sought to attract more students to humanities courses, to develop a concentration in the area of Interdisciplinary Studies, and to provide the community an opportunity to become involved through a series of related activities. Building on existing courses, Meramec faculty were able to offer nine new courses and to supplement these courses with a series of faculty seminars, guest lectures, roundtable discussions, and films. While these latter activities relate to specific course topics, they are of sufficient general interest to be open to the public. In one instance, several films were presented in conjunction with a women's history class. These included "How We Got The Vote," an account of the struggle to win the vote for American women, and "Antonia," a biographical film depicting the life of conductor Antonia Brico. The courses themselves utilize content and methodology drawn from two or more disciplines, and the emphasis is on primary source materials.

Though the initial NEH grant was for one year only, the Meramec campus has maintained an active interdisciplinary program. In the Fall of 1983, eight interdisciplinary courses were offered – for example, Women in Literature, Creative Thinking, Introduction to French Culture, Humanities, Bio-Medical Ethics, and Russian Area Studies. Appropriate supplemental activities were scheduled: a film and discussion on "Death and Dying", a roundtable discussion on Russian Architecture and another on Solzhenitsyn, and a discussion on the topic "Nurturing the Creative Mind," among others.

Efforts are now underway to expand the Interdisciplinary Studies Program through the development of a core curriculum that would lead to an Associate of Arts degree with a specialization in Interdisciplinary

Studies. This core curriculum would include existing courses (Humanities I and II, Creative Thinking, Logic, World Religions), revamped courses stressing interdisciplinary methods (American History I and II, Ancient and Medieval Heritage, Early Modern Europe, Individual and Society), and three new courses (History of Science and Ideas, Society and the Environment, Global Problems).

LIBERAL ARTS WORKSHOP. Each of the six districts participating in the CSCC project hosted a workshop in 1982-83. The St. Louis workshop, held on the Florissant Valley Campus in December of 1982, focused on two topics: the role of interdisciplinary courses and the role of humanities in career programs. Anne Hetlage, Coordinator of the Master of Liberal Arts program at Washington University in St. Louis, spoke on the use of interdisciplinary courses in a graduate-level program geared to part-time, evening, adult students. Nancy Ulbricht, Assistant Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Triton College (Illinois) presented her institution's experience with single-credit humanities modules developed specifically for career students. Visitors from the five other districts participating in this project, together with CSCC representatives, also were involved in this workshop.

During this meeting a number of points were discussed about the relevance of liberal arts for today's students. In addition to the traditional values ascribed to liberal arts courses, a liberal education is useful in providing skills necessary in a technically-oriented world. In seeking to provide students with traditional liberal arts values as well as abilities needed in an information-oriented society, many institutions rely on distribution requirements, a sampling of courses and methods in several different fields. Both humanities and interdisciplinary courses act as tools to provide more coherence in curricula.

FANTASY FESTIVAL. An unusual interdisciplinary course was developed for the Fall, 1983 term. For five years Forest Park campus had sponsored a Fall Fine Arts Festival, which provided a concentrated offering of events each October. In an effort to add coherence to the various events, the 1983 Festival focused on the theme of fantasy. A natural outgrowth of this focus was an interdisciplinary course based on the same topic. Entitled "Fantasy: Its role in the Arts," the six-week course combined attendance at regularly scheduled lectures with attendance at a prescribed number of Festival events. The course was taught by four instructors representing the fields of art, dance and theatre, film and literature, and music who discussed the general concept of fantasy, its importance in their respective areas, and its relevance to the scheduled events. Several of the Festival's guest artists also participated in the class. The events included a college production of Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth*; an oral interpretation of excerpts from John Hawkes' *Travesty* by a member of the Speech/Theatre Department; an art exhibit by New York artist Ellen Lanyon; dance and music concerts; and the films 2001: A Space Odyssey, Juliet of the Spirits, and The Wicker Man, among others. Day and evening sections of the class were taught, and, because of student interest and response, a similar Festival and course will be organized in 1984 on the theme of ritual.

The CSCC project has proved to be an invaluable opportunity for both examination and action in the area of the liberal arts.

COMPUTER WORKSHOP. Several other activities evolved from the work of the campus committees. In the Spring of 1983 the Meramac campus hosted a workshop entitled "Software for a Liberal Education." Sponsored by the Meramac committee under the direction of Susan Ehlers, who is now chair of the campus-wide Liberal Arts Committee, this workshop was directed toward both community college and high school faculty. It examined the role of computers in the college and high school environments, focusing on computer literacy as a requisite for both students and staff. The principal speaker, James E. Tanner, Dean of the College at William Jewel College in Missouri, discussed the concepts of computer literacy and utilization, using his own institution as a model. As a supplement to this address, four Meramac faculty detailed their own experiences with computers, both as an instructional aid and as a research tool. Finally, a panel of high school teachers exchanged observations on the state of computer education in their school systems, underlining the need for the community college to be ready to receive computer-literate high school graduates.

WOMAN'S CHOICE. The final activity resulting from the efforts of the district Liberal Arts Committee was the sponsorship of "Woman's Choice," a performance of four roles from dramatic literature by Leah Jansky, Professor of Humanities at Maryville College in St. Louis. This thought-provoking look at Lady Macbeth, Mary Tyrone, Medea, and Eleanor of Aquitaine also served as a commentary on the role of women in contemporary society. Over a period of three weeks in November of 1983 Professor Jansky recreated moments in the lives of each of these women at the three St. Louis campuses.

IN ST. LOUIS. The CSCC project has proved to be an invaluable opportunity for both examination and action in the area of the liberal arts. Its strengths have been faculty involvement, administration support, and inter-campus cooperation. The ideas generated over the last several years will provide solid direction for future planning: the NEH-assisted projects discussed in this Bulletin are but in their initial stages; the Liberal Arts Committee is currently developing recommendations for a district-wide honors program; and the Social Science Department at Forest Park is mounting a symposium on Technology and Society to be held in the Spring of 1984. These and other efforts will provide a continuing focus for the Liberal Arts at St. Louis Community Colleges.

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